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RECREATION AND YOUTH¹

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RECREATION I shall discuss from two standpoints.

First, from the standpoint of social engineering, I propose to consider a definite plan of a constructive character which has been put into operation. This plan has endeavored to correlate the various human incentives to activity with the known methods of social progress, in order to discover whether a social organization could be made so large that it would reach a great portion of all the girls of America, so simple that average people could run it, and so beautiful that the girls would want to enter it, not because it was good but because it was beautiful and romantic. So far as I know, nothing of this precise kind has ever before been attempted, and as a pure experiment in the field of social engineering it is perhaps worthy of consideration.

The second standpoint is that of the philosophy of construction as contrasted with the philosophy of prevention. No living mountain stream can be dammed with safety, no matter what devastation the spring freshets may bring. The evil will only be accentuated by damming, and the disaster made greater. The only thing worth while that can be done is to provide a better bed for the stream.

Human instincts and desires are the great flowing streams of human life. It is not to be considered that human instincts and desires should be dammed, lest they go astray and do damage. Damming them only produces added devastation.

The Chicago vice report was a strong and able piece of work, but to my mind utterly hopeless. To spend serious time and effort in this day and generation surveying the amount of damage which comes because a great stream has broken its dam and is devastating the country below it, to measure the amount

¹ Read at the meeting of the Academy of Political Science, April 19, 1912.

of the devastation and resolve merely to build bigger and better dams against the evil is fatuous. The tremendous task society must perform is to find out what constitute wholesome relations between men and women under the new conditions of our cities. Boys and girls no longer have the wholesome things to do in the community which during all ages they have had to do; that is, we have put up the dams. We all know well enough that broken dams make endless waste. Our effort and our skill must be devoted to finding means whereby the splendid instinctive feelings of life may have splendid course. It is not merely that the river must be prevented from doing harm, but the water of life itself must not be wasted, because our desires, our hopes, our ambitions, the things we love, constitute life itself. It is not eating nor working nor sleeping that makes life significant; it is the things that we desire, the things that we hope for, the adventure of life itself.

Because of the machine, and the necessary routine ways of working due to the machine, life for a great many people has become full of drudgery, and against steady drudgery human life revolts. At a recent meeting in Cooper Union a young man in the audience told how he went to bed every night, slept, got up every morning and went to work, back home again at night and to bed, and that was all of life there was for him. That represents the possible attainment of life for a large fraction of our population, but that is not living. Adventure is the fundamental thing of the soul. Without brilliant color in living, without possible human attainment, aside from drudgery, life appears insignificant.

The movement of which I speak, the Campfire Girls, is an attempt to show that romance and adventure belong to every day. The old days of physical adventure have gone for most of us. Present-day adventure must be in the social field, the most available unexplored world. If we can provide ways in which adventure can count in connection with everyday work, we may help direct the flow of the powerful streams of human instinct, those tremendous streams which lead boys and girls in their teens to want to know each other. Merely to try to prevent the bad dance-hall and to dam up the other channels of

this kind without giving attention to the providing of a new and better bed for the stream is inadequate. This movement is an attempt to find adventure related to daily life in the everyday world.

When a girl appears before her Campfire and reports that she has learned to make ten standard soups; or that she is able to recognize fifteen kinds of birds by their songs; or that she can describe three kinds of baby cries and tell the cause of each;—things which are equally matters of scientific observation—or that she has walked forty miles in ten days, walking to and from the office or in the woods; or that she has slept for two months with windows open; or that she has kept a daily classified account for one month; or that she has organized the girls of her street to beautify their yards, and that she has received for each of these an award of honor, something which can be added to her attire, the spirit of romance has been suggested to her. Perhaps to receive this honor she wears her ceremonial costume, a straight dress of galatea with fringe on the borders, which she has made herself at a total cost of sixty cents. Possibly her camp name is the Raven and she wears a head dress suggestive of the name she bears as she stands very straight to receive the beads which are the symbol of award—the red beads which indicate attainment in health, or the blue beads, forming a necklace, which indicate attainment in out-of-door craft, or those beads which indicate proficiency in domestic things, taking care of the baby for a month, planning the family expenditure for food at \$2 a week for each person, and seeing that it is carried out, doing the family marketing for one month—as she stands before the Campfire and receives these tokens, the things which are everyday drudgery are thereby indicated as romantic and adventuresome.

When a girl is learning to distinguish three kinds of baby cries or to make ten standard soups, it is not a part of an unmeasured, long-continued daily grind; putting the girl's work into definite attainable parts makes possible for the first time the measurement of woman's work. The most profound difference at present between the work of men and women, in the production of mechanical things, is that man's work is measured

by dollars or pounds or inches, and women's work is unmeasured. No scientific adjustment is possible save upon a basis of measurement, and woman's work has never been measured; it is simply repetition, one thing after another, without beginning, without end. Women and girls no longer have their status in a community because of doing woman's work or feminine things. They are known by other things not necessarily feminine, which are merely human. Women have never acquired status according to the new standards of measurement, and the old standards are going. The consequence is that woman's work has become simply an endless round of drudgery. The Campfire movement is an attempt at regularity in handling all the things of daily life which are worth while, except those of the school, which already has an accepted status, and to cut them up into parcels that are attainable, thus serving as a basis for romantic achievement.

It seems at first as if this were merely a device to throw a bit of glamor over things which are in themselves dull and gray and leaden. But it is much more than this. It is not a disguise, but a transformation. Sleeping with one's window open because it is one's duty is an entirely different thing from doing it because it is one step in an adventure. Learning to care for the table and to cook because it is a thing every girl should know is one thing; learning to make ten standard soups, or two ways of making bread, or four ways of making cake, or four ways of cooking left-over meat, because they are part of a definite social status, is quite another thing.

Aside from making the daily life show the adventure side there is another reason for this sort of thing. During these two generations woman's world is being readjusted. Instead of being merely in the home, woman's work has gone out into the community, but it remains still woman's work. Education, the work of marketing, the care of the laundry have all practically gone out. Marketing is done in stores, bread is cooked in the bakery, not at home, our laundry is cared for in laundries; but all this nevertheless remains woman's work. If the work is badly done the reason is that she has let go her age-long task, she has not yet followed it out of the home as she should. If

woman is to have the same kind of relation to the world's work in the future that she has had in the past, she must reach out in the community and take hold again of those things which have always been fundamentally feminine. That is the new patriotism. The movement of women toward the stores, factories and workshops is but the first step toward the readjustment of women to the work of the world.

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